

Review

Author(s): Lawrence Kaplan

Review by: Lawrence Kaplan

Source: *Science & Society*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring, 1974), pp. 99-102

Published by: Guilford Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40401765>

Accessed: 24-06-2016 19:32 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



S&S Quarterly, Inc., Guilford Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Science & Society*

their own set of contradictions in Dr. Lamb's view: instead of divorcing them from their homeland, the experience reinforced their sense of identity and respect for the values of their own culture. At this time, too, students and intellectuals were growing aware of modern revolutionary thought as it was developing in Russia, China and Japan. The author makes suggestive use of the links between Confucianism and Marxism, their similar concept of man as perfectible, his role consummated in his societal relations. She sees the Communist Party in Vietnam assuming a different goal from its traditional objective to overthrow an existing order. Here its purpose, she believes, is to restore original socio-political ideals, to re-integrate "the cultural and spiritual values of the Vietnamese" man in a society undermined by foreign rule.

In common with Frances FitzGerald's *Fire in the Lake*, *Vietnam's Will to Live* is animated by a deeply sympathetic concern with the traditional elements in Vietnamese culture. The focus of Helen Lamb's book is narrower and her intentions are less ambitious, but the significant advantage of her study is its refusal to divorce cultural from political reality. Her perspective gives us the Vietnamese people whole, in the totality of their objective, painful history. Because she grasps so clearly the destructive power of imperialism itself, whatever its ideological rationale, her book is unmarred by concessions to popular political assumptions. By its scrupulous attention to the lessons of the past, *Vietnam's Will to Live* teaches us more about the Vietnam of today than we have learned up to now, and its insights may indeed forecast the shape of the country's future.

MURIEL HAYNES

New York City

War Without End: American Planning for the Next Vietnam, by Michael T. Klare. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973. \$10.00. Pp. xx, 464.

Michael Klare has written an informative and useful study of the new military strategies which have been designed to maintain America's world empire. The strength of the book lies in the detailing of various techniques, developed since the early 1960s, whose purpose is to defeat wars of national liberation. Of particular value in this work are its descriptions of the extensive and costly government programs which constitute America's counter-revolutionary arsenal.

When the United States emerged from World War II as the unchallenged world power, its economic hegemony was symbolized by the supremacy of the dollar, while its military preeminence took the form

of a series of pacts, alliances and doctrines that enabled us to intervene throughout the globe. Buttressing America's international supremacy was an atomic monopoly. As Soviet nuclear capability developed in the mid-1950s, the Eisenhower-Dulles administration countered with warnings of first strikes and massive retaliation. These threats were continued in the Kennedy and McNamara formulations of counterforce and pre-emptive war.

During these early postwar years American dominance did nothing to prevent the loss of colonies by our allies. Rather, in certain instances, the United States encouraged the decolonization movement, especially as new opportunities for economic penetration presented themselves. On the other hand, in Third World countries where liberation from colonial rule was coupled with programs of revolutionary social change, America used her wealth and influence to perpetuate western control. Despite our substantial efforts, revolutionaries gained power in China, North Vietnam, Algeria and, most dramatically, in Cuba.

Fidel Castro's victory, along with his uncompromising commitment to social change, was viewed from Washington as a dangerous precedent. A great fear of revolution in Latin America began to obsess policy makers, as the Kennedy administration assumed the reins of government. For while Dulles and Eisenhower had carried out counter-revolutionary adventures when deemed necessary, as in Guatemala and Lebanon, they did not appear to recognize the serious challenge to American influence posed by indigenous guerrilla struggles. The suppression of people's wars became a major preoccupation of Kennedy's advisers. Out of the need of American capitalism to bolster repressive regimes around the world came the type of counter-insurgency planning and programs which Michael Klare describes so well in this important book.

What *War Without End* effectively demonstrates is that America's response to national liberation struggles from the outset was technological in character rather than political. True, the Kennedy people, unlike their predecessors, did pay lip service to political anti-guerrilla warfare, but the essence of their approach was always a mechanistic, militaristic, hard line. Even from their own class point of view they ignored what guerrilla fighters understand: that politics takes precedence. For this reason the failure of counter-insurgency was assured at the start.

With charts and tables, together with facts and figures which are not elsewhere readily available, Klare enumerates the various techniques thought up by McNamara and his advisers. He argues convincingly that counter-insurgency relied ultimately on the military of Third World countries. Loyal native armies, consisting of well-paid mercenaries, would

provide the main line of defense, while officer corps trained in any one of several service schools in the continental United States or in the Canal Zone would be prepared for the duties of running their countries. Political scientists like Lucian Pye of M.I.T. provided academic benediction to the "positive role" that armies can play in the modernization process. (Klare, p. 275.) Klare calls our attention to the large number of American-trained officers who have participated in *coups* that have overthrown civilian governments in recent years.

The book then goes on to demonstrate how American policy makers' confidence in counter-insurgency led to our involvement in Indochina. Vietnam served as the test of our resolve to stop people's wars, but equally important, it allowed us to try out the new techniques. As Secretary of Defense McNamara explained in a 1964 memorandum calling for escalation, the South Vietnamese conflict was regarded everywhere "as a test case of U.S. capacity to help a nation meet a Communist 'war of liberation.' " (*The Pentagon Papers*, p. 278.) America would prove to revolutionaries that guerrilla warfare could no longer work.

The tragic history of the Vietnam war has, of course, proven the very opposite, for it has shown that counter-insurgency is ineffectual against determined and courageous people's armies. Very early on, under President Johnson, special forces ceased to play an important role, as massive American ground forces and terror bombing revealed all the horror of our methods. But even the unprecedented destruction wrought by the world's greatest military power failed to gain victory. The undeniable stalemate, with intolerable American casualties, forced the transition from Johnson's searching and destroying to the new so-called Nixon doctrine.

Klare observes how Nixon's strategy grew out of the failures inherent in the Kennedy approach. Counter-revolution remains our chief goal, but no longer is there any pretense of competing with the insurgents for "the hearts and minds" of the people. Nor, given domestic opposition, can American soldiers be called upon to die for autocratic dictators. Instead, Nixon-Kissinger rely on a combination of foreign mercenaries and saturation bombing from the air. Establishment academics like Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University even claim that Nixon's policies represent a more workable scheme for dealing with guerrillas than did the previous designs. The literal elimination of a peasant population by rendering the countryside uninhabitable, Huntington believes, will make guerrilla wars unthinkable. Without peasants there can be no peasant wars. (*Foreign Affairs*, 1968, p. 652.) The Spring, 1973 bombing of Cambodia, and Nixon's threats to North Vietnam, indicate

that the U.S. government has not surrendered its plans of keeping South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos within the "free world." Nor is there any reason to think that Indochina is an isolated case.

Essential to American capitalism is the continued economic exploitation of underdeveloped countries, and this necessitates the perpetuation of regimes which deny the legitimate aspirations of their population for social reform. American-backed repression, mixed with rising expectations, can only lead to more wars of national liberation and further American involvement. This is Michael Klare's prediction:

It is the struggle between these Third World revolutionaries and the guardians of western economic domination—arising from the irreconcilable conflict between the aspirations of the developing nations and the exigencies of western capitalism—that constitutes the impetus to the war without end. (p. 32)

Yet Klare is under no illusion that the Nixon doctrine will be any more successful than its precursors. Surely the mercenary strategy, based upon the assumption that troops will risk their lives for money, "offers no long-term solution to the challenge of a protracted people's war." (p. 364.) The assumption which underlies the new doctrine has been disproven many times in recent years; uncommitted mercenaries clearly do not have the resolve of their enemies, and are no match for them.

Even more to the point is the fact that American capitalism is beginning to reveal signs of strain under the burden of having to police the world. The economic cost of the Vietnam war has distorted the American economy, weakened American competitiveness in the world market and caused an inflation which has led to a crisis of confidence in the formerly sacred dollar. While American economic well-being has been seriously undermined as a result of our costly world involvements, Common Market countries and Japan, without these obligations, have risen to challenge our once inviolable position. The problem for the American ruling class is whether the U.S. can afford to finance counter-revolutionary wars at a price which impairs our status *vis-à-vis* our capitalist competitors. This dilemma might prove insoluble as the contradictions and strains accentuated by government crises like Watergate become increasingly evident. (Indeed, the Watergate affair reveals how counter-insurgency schemes have begun to be applied in domestic politics.) The animosities between capitalist countries may once again assume center stage as the U.S. tries to seek amelioration through improved relations with socialist states.

*City College of the City
University of New York*

LAWRENCE KAPLAN